DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 702 EC 305 253

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TITLE Teaching Practical Communication Skills. Innovations: AAMR Research to Practice Series, Number 7.
INSTITUTION American Association on Mental Retardation, Washington, DC.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-940898-8-42-X; ISSN-1072-4036
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 33p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Association on Mental Retardation, 444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 846, Washington, DC 20001-1512 ($21.95; $19.95 members).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Augmentative and Alternative Communication; *Communication Skills; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Generalization; *Interpersonal Communication; Maintenance; *Mental Retardation; *Personal Autonomy; *Pragmatics; Prompting; Skill Development; Student Educational Objectives; Student Evaluation; *Training Methods; Transfer of Training
IDENTIFIERS *Choice Behavior

ABSTRACT

This guide presents strategies to teach students with mental retardation to request their preferences, protest non-preferred activities, and clarify misunderstandings. The strategies were field tested with more than 200 children and adults in community, residential, vocational, and educational settings. Suggestions are included for instructing students who communicate in various modes, including gestural, verbal, sign language, and communication boards. An introductory chapter identifies the assumptions on which the strategies are based and offers general recommendations regarding the teaching of pragmatic communication skills. Chapter 2 discusses the specifics of how to teach pragmatic communication skills and covers: choosing a communication mode, preassessment, developing criteria-based objectives, ongoing assessment while teaching, determining mastery, determining student preferences, initial teaching, and providing prompting strategies. Chapter 3 is on expanding communication across natural environments and covers ongoing assessment (including the mand-model approach, time delay, and incidental teaching); enhancing maintenance of skills; and teaching practitioners to use the prompting strategies. Chapter 4 offers case studies in teaching these skills in a residential environment, a classroom, a home, a home with a sibling, and a community. Chapter 5 stresses the value of pragmatic communication skills in helping students become equal partners in communicative interactions. (Contains 26 references.) (DB)

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